

Autumn Worden are students of Summerville High School and the Connections Visual and Performing Arts Academy. This educational facility was established 10 years ago on the Summerville campus to support the interests of students in visual and performing arts. Jazz @ 8 is directed by Madeline Young, the vocal music and drama director and teacher. Throughout the school year, this group performs at many community and school events, including parades, veteran ceremonies, luncheons for service groups, benefit dinners, and at local football and basketball games.

The invitation to perform in Washington D.C. was a distinguished honor, and the students rehearsed every day to prepare. Accompanying the group to Washington, D.C. was Diana Harford, Principal of the Connections Visual and Performing Arts Academy and David Urquhart, Principal of Summerville High School. The Tuolumne County community, which is a small, rural community in the Sierra Nevada foothills of central California, was enormously generous and supportive of the students, the program and the school, providing the entire funding for the students to be able to make this once in a lifetime trip. In a very short amount of time, generous contributions ranging from \$20 to over \$6,000 were received to raise the \$20,000 to cover all the costs for the four-day trip. Large donors include Summerville High School Foundation, Sonora Area Foundation, Black Hats, and Black Oak Casino.

In addition to the tree lighting performance, the talented group of young adults performed at the White House for two hours during public tours and the Library of Congress during the 2011 Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony reception hosted by the California State Society and sponsored by Southern California Edison.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and commending the Summerville High School Jazz @ 8 Advanced Jazz Choir on this accomplishment, and for representing the city and county of Tuolumne in such a positive light.

RECOGNIZING DANIEL MAUGHAN, BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA HEROISM AWARD RECIPIENT

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to recognize Daniel Maughan of Euless, Texas, for receiving the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Heroism Award. The Heroism Award is the third-highest award presented by BSA for lifesaving and meritorious action. This award is reserved for individuals who have demonstrated heroism and skill in saving or attempting to save a life. Since the award's inception in 1923, Boy Scouts of America has only awarded approximately 3,500 recipients this distinguished honor.

On May 15, 2011, Daniel's father, Mike Maughan, Ph.D., suffered a heart attack due to an unknown blood clot that quickly traveled to his pulmonary artery. In an act of heroism, Daniel performed CPR on his father, sustaining his life until paramedics arrived on scene. Due to the trauma caused by the blood

clot, Mike later passed away with his family by his side. Mike was an avid supporter of the Boy Scouts and a mentor to many young men in scouting.

Daniel has earned numerous Boy Scout honors including the rank of Eagle Scout—the highest rank in the Boy Scout organization—and the Silver Palm. Currently, Daniel is a freshman at the Milwaukee School of Engineering, where he is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in mechanical engineering and is a member of the rowing team.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to represent a hero like Daniel. I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring Daniel for his courageous acts of bravery.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, on January 26, 1995, when the last attempt at a balanced budget amendment passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 300–132, the national debt was \$4,801,405,175,294.28.

Today, it is \$15,099,497,460,357.58. We've added \$10,298,092,285,063.30 dollars to our debt in 16 years. This is \$10 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

INTRODUCING THE AFFORDABLE MORTGAGE FOR HOMEOWNERS ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Affordable Mortgage for Homeowners Act. This bill would reduce the interest rate on all mortgages owned or guaranteed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac to the current—and more affordable—interest rate, which averages four percent.

As our nation is recovering from the worst recession and housing crisis in decades, millions of homeowners continue to struggle to make their mortgage payments and keep their homes. Approximately 22 percent or 10.7 million of homeowners owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth. In 2011, two million households received a foreclosure filing. Furthermore, the total mortgage debt overhang in the United States approaches \$700 billion dollars. The state of Florida is by far one of the hardest hit regions in the country.

During the height of the subprime mortgage crisis in 2008, many recognized that it was the predatory lending practices of mortgage lenders that pushed millions of homeowners to purchase homes they could not afford. Today, millions of responsible homeowners have underwater mortgages, because of these unscrupulous lending practices and declining home values. I refuse to let American families struggle through no fault of their own.

While the U.S. government has established programs to help homeowners who are both current and in default on their mortgages, it has not been enough. Indeed, many households did not qualify for these programs or were not aware of their existence. My bill will fix this problem by requiring Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to reduce the interest rate on all the mortgages they own to the current interest rate, which averages four percent. Homeowners who have a better mortgage product or want to opt out will be exempted. My bill is the first program that will directly help millions of homeowners and address the housing crisis comprehensively.

Mr. Speaker, homeownership is a central part of the American dream. Ensuring that people are able to maintain this critical investment is essential to achieving sustainable growth and economic development in our communities. Millions of responsible Americans continue to bear the cost of this economic crisis. I find this to be unacceptable. They deserve fair and affordable mortgages that allow them to plan for the future. This is why I urge my colleagues to take a major step towards ending the housing crisis and support this important legislation.

HONORING STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor Stanislaus National Forest Service for supplying the 2011 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. No season generates more enthusiasm, heightened sense of good will, deeper traditions, and economic benefits than the annual Christmas season, and the Stanislaus National Forest Service provided the single and most beautiful symbol of the season—the Christmas Tree.

This year, Speaker of the House JOHN BOEHNER hosted the tree lighting ceremony on the West Front Lawn of the United States Capitol Building on Tuesday, December 6. Seven-year-old Johnny Crawford from Sonora, California was the lucky child who flipped the switch and turned on the 10,000 LED lights that illuminated the tree.

Since 1970, it has become an honor for one of the National Forests to be asked to provide the Capitol Tree. The appointed National Forest, in turn, engages help from diverse partners throughout its respective State. The opportunity to provide the Capitol Christmas Tree becomes a state-wide celebration and civic event, leaving a lasting impression on all who are fortunate enough to be involved.

2011 is only the fourth time California has provided the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree—the last time was in 1995. Known as “The People's Tree,” the 2011 Capitol Christmas Tree was harvested from the Stanislaus National Forest located in the Central Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The Forest Service recommended 15 trees to the Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol Grounds, Ted Bechtel, in late August of 2011. He made his final decision after a good night's sleep. Several aspects are taken into account during the selection, including the shape and

fullness of the tree, the tree color and foliage condition, and species characteristics of needle retention and branch pliability. Of course, access to the tree for ease of cutting, loading, and transporting are also considered.

This year's 118-year-old Sierra White Fir tree is 63 feet tall. It weighs 8,300 pounds and traveled 4,280 miles from California to Washington, D.C. Along the way, it made 23 stops; 13 in California and 11 across the nation. An additional 100 companion trees were delivered to the capital and placed in federal offices and congressional offices. They also transported the tree donated by the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians to the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. The tree's arrival received international press and showed the rest of the world that our nation has the freedom to celebrate a religious holiday at the Capitol.

In addition, the Stanislaus National Forest Service held a Statewide Song Search and Art Contest. They collected 2,500 outdoor and 2,200 indoor Christmas ornaments made by Californians for the Tree. The use of recycled and natural materials was encouraged. Also, they conducted a food drive for Gallup, New Mexico, the third poorest city in the nation. The statewide food drive involved several food banks from throughout the state that donated a pallet of food as well as collected food at every stop made in California. The food was transported to Gallup, New Mexico, and the community was very appreciative of the more than 14 pallets of food that the team delivered on November 16.

The Stanislaus National Forest also coordinated all the donations to fund the harvesting, transport, and tour of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. Additionally, there were many that assisted in the momentous occasion that made it possible. Special recognition should go to Maria Benech, 2011 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree Coordinator, who worked tirelessly on the project. Central Sierra Arts Council helped with the statewide song search and Art Competition. Gini Siebert of Out of Hand helped create over 1,000 clay ornaments for the Tree and the indoor trees by garnering donations from Sonora businesses to pay for classroom art projects. The Sonora Garden Club made the 48 sprays that were given as gifts at each community the Tree visited across the United States. Fire on the Mountain were critical in the November 5 Tree Cutting Celebration in Sonora. Mark Patton, Frank Gilbeau, and Danny Hess cut and laid the Tree down on the special cradle without breaking a branch in the 17 degree weather. The City of Sonora hosted a parade and escort on November 5. And finally, Cal Trans and CHP who helped the Stanislaus National Forest Service move the tree from Point A to Barstow.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and commending the Stanislaus National Forest Service for a job well done in supplying the 2011 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree.

HONORING DAN TERRELL

HON. TODD ROKITA

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege as the representative of Indiana's

Fourth District to rise and pay tribute to Mr. Dan Terrell, mayor of Mitchell, Indiana.

Mayor Terrell is a man of deep civic conviction, a loving father of 6, and a devoted grandfather of 17.

Dan Terrell was born in Mitchell, Indiana, and has remained there his entire life. He has never lost the small town conservative spirit that growing up in the Heartland of America gave him.

Following his retirement from the Canadian Pacific Railroad, Dan Terrell was ready to concentrate fully on helping his hometown overcome challenges that so many small cities and towns have faced: lost businesses, sidewalks that were unsafe or non-existent, infrastructure in total disrepair, drinking water barely able to pass State regulations. During Mayor Terrell's four years in office these, and many other concerns, have not only been addressed but have been corrected.

Besides the tangible accomplishments, his representation of the city as he traveled throughout Indiana offered his constituents a mayor they could be proud of.

His leadership and vision will be truly missed as he leaves the mayor's office. His love and his devotion for his hometown will continue. Mr. Speaker, it has been a true honor to stand in tribute and offer my thanks to the civic service of Mayor Dan Terrell, one of Indiana's best mayors and my close friend.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1540, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great regret that I rise to oppose this Defense Authorization Conference Report. This is the first Defense Authorization Conference Report I have opposed since I was first elected in 2002.

I cannot support this Conference Report because it limits the tools available to detain and prosecute terror suspects and could have the unintended effect of weakening our national security. As currently written, the language in the Report also creates potentially dangerous and costly confusion about the roles of the military and law enforcement officials during the arrest of terror suspects. At the same time, certain provisions leave open the possibility that innocent U.S. citizens could be wrongfully and indefinitely detained at the direction of the President without appropriate access to civilian courts.

The mix of tools currently available to the Executive Branch has strengthened our national security. Civilian prosecutors and federal courts have convicted and imprisoned hundreds of terrorists, while the military tribunals have convicted only a half-dozen. Why would we want to tip the scales toward a less effective enforcement tool? Why tie our own hands?

Sections 1021 and 1022 of the Report will generate confusion as to whether the military or the FBI and civilian law enforcement agencies have custody over terror suspects. Today, in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Com-

mittee, FBI Director Mueller expressed concern and uncertainty about the confusing directives in the Report that could cause misunderstandings between the FBI and the military regarding the detention of covered individuals during the crucial early moments of an arrest when information gathering is most important. He described an example where a terrorist arrest in a city like New York could cause unnecessary confusion and conflict between city law enforcement and the military because New York City is not a military controlled area. He also worries about how the situation would play out if a group of detainees—some covered, others not—are captured at the same time and what impact this might have on the handling of their cases.

There is also much confusion about the indefinite detention authority in section 1021 of the measure. Some say that this section does not apply to U.S. citizens, but if that was the intention of the conferees, American citizens should have been specifically exempted the way they were in Section 1022 regarding mandatory military detention. The fact that American citizens were expressly exempted from mandatory military detention under section 1022—but not exempted under section 1021—suggests that Congress is implicitly endorsing the idea that American citizens may be indefinitely detained under the Authorization for Use of Military Force. If Congress is going to spell out the rules of arrest and detention, it should have made clear that American citizens may not be indefinitely detained without due process of law.

How U.S. citizens are to be treated when detained as terror suspects and the question of jurisdictional leadership during terror-related arrests are matters of such supreme national consequence that they should not have been expeditiously appended to a National Defense Authorization Conference Report. These important issues should have had the benefit of debate and close examination that can only happen during regular order.

RECOGNIZING MR. TODD LAVOGUE AND HIS STUDENTS AS HAS- TINGS' HEROES

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Todd LaVogue and the students in his social studies class at Roosevelt Middle School in West Palm Beach. Mr. LaVogue recently engaged his students in Amnesty International's letter-writing campaign for human rights. Mr. LaVogue and his students joined people of good conscience around the world in writing letters to government officials in many countries, urging them to release political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. The students were able to see what such efforts can accomplish when the government of the nation of Myanmar released opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi after many years of house arrest.

By expressing their concern for people improperly and unfairly held in captivity by authoritarian governments around the world, Mr. LaVogue and his students are shining examples of the best in humankind. They are people deserving of respect and admiration from all of us.